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Letter dated 6 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to draw your attention to the volatile situation that persists along Israel's northern border, which has the potential to further deteriorate, leading to greater regional instability.

On Friday evening, 29 June 2001, two Israeli soldiers were wounded, one of them seriously, by shrapnel when Hizbullah terrorists fired dozens of anti-tank missiles and mortars at two army outposts in the Mount Dov region on the Israeli side of the Blue Line. This incident is merely the latest in an ongoing series of cross-border attacks perpetrated by Hizbullah in the wake of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon last year.

Israel views all these attacks as flagrant violations of the line of withdrawal, as established by the United Nations, constituting a grave threat to peace and security along the border and in the region as a whole. Earlier violations have been detailed in a number of letters, most recently in my letters dated 16 April 2001 (S/2001/367), 16 February 2001 (A/55/792-S/2001/142), 6 February 2001 (A/55/767-S/2001/111), 26 November 2000 (S/2000/1121), 23 October 2000 (S/2000/1011), 19 October 2000 (S/2000/1002) and 7 October 2000 (S/2000/969).

Despite Israel's full and confirmed compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), Hizbullah, with the complicity of both the Lebanese and Syrian Governments, continues to launch attacks on Israeli forces deployed on the Israeli side of the Blue Line. By their active and tacit support for Hizbullah's activities, both Lebanon and Syria are also in violation of basic norms of international law, the provisions of Security Council resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 1310 (2000) and 1337 (2001), which call for the restoration of international peace and security and the return of the effective authority and presence of the Government of Lebanon in the south, and the Blue Line as determined by the Secretary-General and endorsed by the Security Council. Indeed, Lebanon's continued failure to deploy its forces in the area, its disregard for the integrity of the

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Blue Line and its encouragement and support for the launching of provocative acts of terrorism and aggression from its territory represent a clear threat to peace and security in the region.

It has become apparent that Lebanon's failure to assert control in the South and to fulfil its obligations under international law is due, to a large extent, to the overwhelming degree of control that the Government of Syria exerts over its neighbour. It is a well-known fact that Syria, with over 30,000 troops stationed there and occupying a significant portion of Lebanese territory, is the main power broker in Lebanon, and as such shares responsibility for Lebanon's failure to comply with the resolutions of the Security Council and for the continued violence and instability along the border. The Syrian Government also continues to support the activities of Hizbullah, permits overland arms transfers to pass through Syrian territory from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Hizbullah's operatives, allows Hizbullah to maintain terrorist training facilities in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley and has directly enhanced the capability of the organization to launch attacks against Israel.

In light of the above, the international community must seriously question the conduct of the Syrian Government given Syria's impending candidature for membership in the Security Council. As an occupier of a neighbouring country, a sponsor of Hizbullah's terrorism and a state that grants terrorist organizations safe harbour in its territory, Syria's policies stand in blatant contradiction to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Member States must take care to ensure that only nations that strictly adhere, both in word and deed, to the provisions of the Charter ascend to membership in such an important organ of the world organization.

Article 23 of the Charter explicitly states that in electing the non-permanent members of the Security Council due regard must be specially paid, in the first instance, to "the contribution of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security". It is clear that the actions of the Government of Syria, rather than advancing the cause of peace, constitute a grave threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. As to the other criteria stipulated in Article 23, that of geographic distribution, in the Syrian case, the use of geographic equity as leverage for eligibility is insufficient and may lead to a most contradictory and dubious election of a non-permanent member to the Security Council.

Israel is fully committed to peace in the Middle East, including with Syria and Lebanon, and is prepared to enter into negotiations with the leaders of those nations with no preconditions. Israel also has no interest in a further escalation along the northern border but is obligated to exercise its right of self-defence to protect the lives of its soldiers and civilians and to bring about an end to the state-sponsored terrorism emanating from Lebanon and Syria. The persistence of this dangerous situation greatly imperils regional peace and security.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under item 179 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yehuda **Lancry**
Permanent Representative